

## Summary of Dissertation

Dissertation Title	Unveiling the Complexities of Syrian Forced Migrants and Turkish Community Integration Using a Factor-Based Approach
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The year 2011 marks the beginning of the Syrian conflict that resulted in one of the largest displacements in recent history. Although Syrians can be found in all parts of the world in 2024, the bordering countries of Syria have received the biggest share of Syrians fleeing the conflict in their home country. Turkey in particular has received the largest number of Syrian forced migrants globally with more than three million registered under Turkey's temporary protection system. Nonetheless, the situation in Syria is vague, and there is no clear solution on the horizon for the displaced Syrians. The chances to return voluntarily under current circumstances are extremely low, and the opportunities to resettle them in a third country are limited. Thus, integration is the only available durable solution that can comfort the Syrian forced migrants in Turkey and other receiving countries.

In the early days of the Syrian displacement in Turkey, integration was not seen as an issue. The Turkish government implemented an open-door policy which embraced the arriving Syrians in the name of "brotherhood" and "guest hood" that used the shared religion, culture, and history in a vital role to bring Syrians and Turks closer. However, this acceptance of Syrians did not last long; tensions, violence, and social distance started growing a short time after the Syrians' arrival began, and the presence of Syrians has become one of the most discussed topics when talking about Turkey's future. The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to this ongoing discussion by asking: Why is the integration of Syrian forced migrants and the Turkish receiving community facing challenging times even though the two communities share several similarities including culture and religion?

Taking into account that integration has no one globally accepted definition, and the fact that the available frameworks cannot be applied easily to empirical research, studying and testing integration in its current form is a complicated task that requires further conceptual efforts for more nuanced empirical results. In this dissertation, the recent theoretical developments on integration were employed to develop a simple conceptual model that can be used to study integration in different contexts. The suggested framework builds on the idea that integration is dynamic and interactive and that it keeps changing based on several influencing factors – facilitators or barriers – that can change according to the context in which integration is taking place. The framework also explains that the two communities, arriving and receiving, are equally involved and equally responsible for the progress of integration; and integration domains and dimensions are connected – separating them from each other is not possible.

To answer the main research question, and to clarify the main factors that influence the integration of the Syrian and Turkish communities, the explanatory approach and quantitative research methods were used on the developed conceptual framework. The field research includes the implementation of a multisectoral survey in two major Turkish cities: Gaziantep and İzmir. Using random sampling, the data collection resulted in 1,076 completed surveys with Syrians and 1,115 completed surveys with Turkish citizens. The dependent variable and the independent variables were selected and pre-tested to make sure that they do not violate the assumptions of multi linear regression analysis. After confirming their

validity, the data was tested using SPSS, and two multi linear regression models were produced, one for Syrian forced migrants in Turkey and one for the Turkish community.

The results reveal that although cultural and religious similarities have a vital role in facilitating integration in the Turkish context, they are not enough to reach a sustainable form of integration. There are other vital factors involved, and these factors can also facilitate or hinder the integration process. For the Syrian community in Turkey, the significant factors that act as facilitators are: belonging to a higher age group, sufficient Turkish language skills, high life satisfaction, existence of friendships with the other community, presence of an ethnic enclave, acknowledging cultural similarities, having a good access to services, and having a favorable legal status. The main barrier to their integration is daily negative encounters. For the Turkish community, the significant factors that act as facilitators to integration are: belonging to a higher age group, existence of friendships with the other community, acknowledging cultural similarities, having a good access to services, being aware of responsibility to integrate, and being attached to religious believes and practices. The significant factors that act as barriers are: gender – Turkish women accept Syrians more than men, having insufficient information about the other community and the services provided to them, and having high level of prejudice.

This dissertation contributes to previous works in four ways. First, while previous works focus on integration domains and dimensions, this work focuses primarily on integration factors in their two forms—facilitators or barriers—as a new approach to investigate integration. Second, the vast majority of available works focus on one community only, mainly the Syrians, while in this dissertation both communities, the arriving and the receiving, were taken into consideration at the same time. Third, the majority of previous studies focused on small samples using qualitative research methods. This dissertation focuses on a large sample size which offers a better understanding of the reality on community and national levels. Fourth, this dissertation employs advanced statistical tests, namely, multiple linear regression which has rarely been used in previous integration research.